

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000387

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY (FRANK); BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA; EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI)/P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA (BERBENA); INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA (ANN LUZZATO); USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA; BRUSSELS/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - BUSH INAUGURATION IRAQ - ELECTIONS MIDDLE EAST
PARIS - FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. BUSH INAUGURATION
2. IRAQ - ELECTIONS
3. MIDDLE EAST

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

YESTERDAY'S STRIKES ARE TODAY'S FRONT-PAGE STORY, EXCEPT FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE, WHICH TITLES "EUROPE, IRAQ, IRAN, CHINA: WHAT THE WORLD EXPECTS FROM GEORGE BUSH." THE INSIDE STORIES REPORTING ON THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION ARE TITLED "BUSH II AS A MISSIONARY 'FOR LIBERTY FOR THE WORLD'" (LE FIGARO); "BUSH, THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE FIREFIGHTER" (LIBERATION); "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BUSH II" (LE PARISIEN) AND "GEORGE W. BUSH, DEFENDER OF LIBERTY" (FRANCE SOIR). SOME REGIONAL COMMENTARY FOCUSED ON THE INAUGURAL SPEECH. (SEE PART C)

IRAQ AND THE COMING ELECTIONS ARE THE SUBJECT OF A FRONT-PAGE OP-ED BY ALAIN FRACHON IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE TITLED "ELECTIONS IN IRAQ AND FEAR OF THE SHIITES." FRACHON EXPLAINS: "WITH THE COMING ELECTIONS, ARAB CAPITALS IN THE REGION DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY SHOULD FEAR MORE DEMOCRACY AS A PRECEDENT, INCREASING VIOLENCE OR A CIVIL WAR BETWEEN SHIITES AND SUNNIS." (SEE PART C) RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO INTERVIEWS GERARD CHALIAND, AN EXPERT ON CONFLICTS, AND THE AUTHOR OF A BOOK ON THE TWO IRAQI WARS: "THE MILITARY SITUATION HAS WORSENERED. BUT NOT HOLDING THE ELECTIONS ON JANUARY 30 WOULD BE AN OBVIOUS SIGN OF FAILURE. MY PREDICTION IS THAT THE RESULTS WILL BE LAME, BECAUSE ONE CANNOT HOPE TO REBUILD A POST-BAATH IRAQ WITHOUT THE SUNNIS, AND APPARENTLY THEY ARE NOT PARTICIPATING."

RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE POINT'S EDITORIAL ON THE MIDDLE EAST URGES THE U.S. TO WEIGH IN ON THE PARTIES, WHILE IT CRITICIZES EUROPE'S LIMITED INFLUENCE AND FRANCE'S LACK OF CREDIBILITY WITH ISRAEL BECAUSE OF ITS PRO-ARAB STANCE. (SEE PART C)

EUROPE AS A TARGET OF A NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL REPORT IS THE BASIS FOR A STORY IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO BY BRUSSELS'S CORRESPONDENT, ALEXANDRINE BOUILHET: "SEEN FROM WASHINGTON, THE EUROPEAN UNION IS NOT A POWER OF THE FUTURE. ACCORDING TO THE CIA'S STUDY, 'MAPPING THE GLOBAL FUTURE,' EUROPE WILL BE UNABLE TO PLAY THE PREDOMINANT ROLE IT WANTS TO PLAY ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. THESE CONCLUSIONS HAVE SENT A CHILL ACROSS BRUSSELS. EUROCRATS ARE ALL THE MORE ANNOYED ABOUT THE REPORT AND ITS SIMPLISTIC AND 'PESSIMISTIC' VISION OF EUROPE BECAUSE THEY ARE CAREFULLY PLANNING FOR PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT NEXT MONTH. 'WHY, THEY ASK, WOULD THE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. WASTE HIS TIME COMING TO BRUSSELS IF THE EU IS INDEED SUCH A NEGLIGIBLE QUANTITY?'"

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

BUSH INAUGURATION

"SEMANTICS"

FRANCOIS BCET IN REGIONAL L'ALSACE (01/21): "FOR THE MOMENT, ONLY THE VOCABULARY HAS CHANGED. THE AXIS OF EVIL HAS GIVEN WAY TO 'OUTPOSTS OF TYRANNY,'... BUT THE WAY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND THE OBJECTIVES HAVE NOT CHANGED."

"HELPING BUSH"

JEAN-CLAUDE KIEFER IN REGIONAL DERNIERES NOUVELLES D'ALSACE (01/21): "WE NEED TO HELP THE UNITED STATES. ALTHOUGH IT IS 'THE' WORLD'S NUMBER ONE MILITARY POWER, THE U.S. IS POLITICALLY WEAK. IT SYSTEMATICALLY HAS TO FLEX ITS MUSCLES TO GET WHAT IT WANTS, WITH THE RISK OF ALWAYS HAVING TO ACT

FORCEFULLY TO REMAIN CREDIBLE. THIS IS RISKY FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD. HOW CAN WE HELP BUSH? BY TIRELESSLY TRYING TO BE HEARD."

"DIPLOMACY"

PHYILIPPE WAUCAMPT IN REGIONAL LE RPUBLICAIN LORRAIN (01/21):

"THE U.S. SEEMS TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE LIMITS OF DIPLOMACY BY WHIP AND SCORN, SEEING THAT IT HAS CAUSED THE REJECTION OF AMERICA AND REINFORCED TERRORISM. THE PR-HUMANITARIAN OPERATION MOUNTED AFTER THE TSUNAMI SHOWS THAT THE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO BE LIKED, BUT THERE ARE LIMITS IN THE NEO-PURITAN VIEW OF A WORLD IN BLACK AND WHITE WHERE THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH AMERICA ARE AGAINST HER."

IRAQ - ELECTIONS

"ELECTIONS IN IRAQ AND FEAR OF THE SHIITES"
ALAIN FRACHON IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE (01/21): "WITH THE COMING ELECTIONS, ARAB CAPITALS IN THE REGION DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY SHOULD FEAR MORE DEMOCRACY AS A PRECEDENT, INCREASING VIOLENCE OR A CIVIL WAR BETWEEN SHIITES AND SUNNIS. IN THE 1980'S IT WAS IRAN'S SHIITES WHO WERE FEARED. TODAY THE DANGER WOULD BE COMING FROM IRAQ. AFTER TEHERAN, BAGHDAD'S NEW SHIITE POWER COULD GALVANIZE ALL SHIITE MINORITIES IN THE REGION AND LEAD TO INSTABILITY THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE EAST. ALREADY, TEHERAN'S SHIITE THEOCRACY IS A MAJOR CONCERN FOR WASHINGTON. FROM THE SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE GULF, THE POSSIBILITY OF A SHIITE REGIME IN BAGHDAD IS PERCEIVED IN THE ARAB WORLD AS A POLITICAL UPHEAVAL WITHOUT PRECEDENT. IMAGINING THAT THIS NEW POWER COULD ALIGN WITH TEHERAN IS ENOUGH TO GIVE CERTAIN ARAB COUNTRIES NIGHTMARES. BUT IS THIS SCENARIO PLAUSIBLE? NOT QUITE. FIRST BECAUSE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRAQ'S POLITICAL SHIITE BASE AND TEHERAN'S IS A COMPLEX ONE. IRAQ'S SHIITES ARE PROFOUNDLY `ARAB,' LEADING TO A NON-AVOWED DISTANCE WITH IRAN'S PRO-PERSIAN SHIITES. IN SHORT, THE RELATIONSHIP IS AS MUCH ONE OF PARTNERSHIP AS IT IS ONE OF RIVALRY."

MIDDLE EAST

"A GLIMMER OF LIGHT IN JERUSALEM?"
CLAUDE IMBERT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY LE POINT (01/21): "THE SIGNS OF HOPE COMING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST WILL SOON BE STIFLED UNLESS THE U.S. DECIDES TO WEIGH IN ON THE PROCESS. HAVING BEEN WELL ELECTED, PRESIDENT BUSH HAS A FREE HAND TO ACT. CAUGHT IN THE CALAMITOUS QUAGMIRE OF IRAQ, INTERNATIONALLY AFFECTED BY GROWING ANTI-AMERICANISM, HE IS TAKING THE MEASURE OF WHAT HE COULD GAIN FROM A PEACEFUL CONCLUSION OF ONE OF THE MOST NEFARIOUS CONFLICTS EVER. BUSH HAS OPENLY SUPPORTED SHARON, BUT BEHIND THE SCENE HE HAS ALSO DEVELOPED TIES WITH ABU MAZEN'S MODERATES. HE CAN COUNT ON MUBARAK AS AN ALLY. AND THE SAUDI REGIME IS PROMISING TO BE INCREASINGLY VIGILANT: THEY CAN FEEL THE FLAMES COMING CLOSER. TEHERAN IS THE REGIONAL JOKER. FOR THE TIME BEING WASHINGTON IS LETTING THE EUROPEANS FEEL THEIR WAY AROUND. IN THIS HIGH-RISK GAME, THE EUROPEANS WILL ONLY HAVE A MORAL INFLUENCE, AS THEY CONTINUE TO GIVE WASHINGTON THE SUPPORT IT EXPECTS, BUT NO MORE. FRANCE, BY ALIGNING WITH EVERY ARAB DEMAND, HAS LOST THE RESPECT OF ISRAEL. SINCE THE FAILURES OF THE CLINTON-BARAK-ARAFAT TRIO, PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. TODAY SHARON AND ABU MAZEN ARE IN A POSITION TO DIALOGUE AND TO DECIDE. TO HELP THEM WE MUST BELIEVE IN THEM. BUT MOSTLY THEY EACH NEED TO BELIEVE IN THE OTHER." WOLFF